



Aviation Investigation Final Report

Location:	GULFPORT, Mississippi	Accident Number:	ATL96LA030
Date & Time:	January 7, 1996, 16:12 Local	Registration:	N424WA
Aircraft:	Piper PA-34-200T	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Defining Event:		Injuries:	4 Minor
Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General aviation - Personal		

Analysis

During the preflight planning, the pilot estimated that the flight would require 67 gallons of fuel. He added 20 gallons of fuel to the aircraft fuel system and estimated that 85 gallons of fuel were on board at takeoff. He did not report that the airplane was topped off with fuel before departing. Approximately three hours into the flight, both engines lost power about two miles south of the shore line; the airplane was ditched about 1-1/4 mile south of the shore. No fuel was found in the fuel system after the airplane was recovered from the water; the fuel system was intact during the examination

Probable Cause and Findings

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident to be: inadequate preflight planning/preparation by the pilot, and inadequate supply of fuel in the airplane, which resulted in fuel exhaustion and subsequent ditching at sea.

Findings

Occurrence #1: LOSS OF ENGINE POWER(TOTAL) - NONMECHANICAL
Phase of Operation: APPROACH

Findings

1. ALL ENGINES
2. (C) PREFLIGHT PLANNING/PREPARATION - INADEQUATE - PILOT IN COMMAND
3. (C) FLUID,FUEL - EXHAUSTION
4. (C) FUEL SUPPLY - INADEQUATE - PILOT IN COMMAND

Occurrence #2: FORCED LANDING
Phase of Operation: DESCENT - EMERGENCY

Occurrence #3: DITCHING
Phase of Operation: EMERGENCY LANDING

Findings
5. TERRAIN CONDITION - WATER

Factual Information

On January 7, 1996, at 1612 central standard time, a Piper PA-34-200T, ditched in the Gulf of Mexico approximately two miles south of Keesler Air Force Base near Gulfport, Mississippi. The personal flight operated under the provisions of Title 14 CFR Part 91 with an instrument flight plan filed. Visual weather conditions prevailed at the time of the accident. The airplane sustained substantial damage; the commercial pilot and the three passengers received minor injuries. The flight departed St. Petersburg, Florida, at 1400 eastern standard time.

The pilot reported that during the preflight planning, he estimated that the airplane would require 67 gallons of fuel to complete the flight. He added 20 gallons of fuel to the fuel system, but he did not state that the airplane fuel system was topped off before the departure from St. Petersburg. The pilot estimated that 85 gallons of fuel were onboard at takeoff (see attached pilot's aircraft accident report NTSB Form 6120.1/2).

According to the pilot, they were enroute to the Isle of Capri Casino, in Gulfport, and they were about three hours into the flight, when they experienced a complete loss of power on the left engine followed by a complete loss of engine power on the right engine. The loss of engine power occurred about 2 miles south of the Gulfport shoreline. After attempts to restart the engines, the pilot prepared the passengers for a water landing, and instructed them to brace for the impact. The airplane ditched about 1 1/4 south of the shoreline. Within a few minutes of the ditching, a local fisherman rescued the four occupants from the water.

Following the recovery of the airplane from the water, the fuel system was examined. During this examination, no fuel was recovered from the fuel system. No airplane mechanical problems were reported by the pilot.

Pilot Information

Certificate:	Commercial	Age:	32, Male
Airplane Rating(s):	Single-engine land; Multi-engine land	Seat Occupied:	Left
Other Aircraft Rating(s):	None	Restraint Used:	
Instrument Rating(s):	Airplane	Second Pilot Present:	No
Instructor Rating(s):	Airplane multi-engine; Airplane single-engine; Instrument airplane	Toxicology Performed:	No
Medical Certification:	Class 1 Valid Medical--no waivers/lim.	Last FAA Medical Exam:	January 23, 1995
Occupational Pilot:	UNK	Last Flight Review or Equivalent:	
Flight Time:	460 hours (Total, all aircraft), 51 hours (Total, this make and model), 385 hours (Pilot In Command, all aircraft), 67 hours (Last 90 days, all aircraft), 33 hours (Last 30 days, all aircraft), 4 hours (Last 24 hours, all aircraft)		

Aircraft and Owner/Operator Information

Aircraft Make:	Piper	Registration:	N424WA
Model/Series:	PA-34-200T PA-34-200T	Aircraft Category:	Airplane
Year of Manufacture:		Amateur Built:	
Airworthiness Certificate:	Normal	Serial Number:	34-7970056
Landing Gear Type:	Retractable - Tricycle	Seats:	6
Date/Type of Last Inspection:	August 8, 1995 Annual	Certified Max Gross Wt.:	4570 lbs
Time Since Last Inspection:	102 Hrs	Engines:	2 Reciprocating
Airframe Total Time:	4990 Hrs	Engine Manufacturer:	Continental
ELT:	Installed, not activated	Engine Model/Series:	TSIO-360-EB
Registered Owner:	B.C. JOHNSON	Rated Power:	200 Horsepower
Operator:		Operating Certificate(s) Held:	None
Operator Does Business As:		Operator Designator Code:	

Meteorological Information and Flight Plan

Conditions at Accident Site:	Visual (VMC)	Condition of Light:	Day
Observation Facility, Elevation:	GPT ,28 ft msl	Distance from Accident Site:	3 Nautical Miles
Observation Time:	16:38 Local	Direction from Accident Site:	360°
Lowest Cloud Condition:	Clear	Visibility	20 miles
Lowest Ceiling:	None	Visibility (RVR):	
Wind Speed/Gusts:	12 knots / 20 knots	Turbulence Type Forecast/Actual:	/
Wind Direction:	33°	Turbulence Severity Forecast/Actual:	/
Altimeter Setting:	30 inches Hg	Temperature/Dew Point:	3°C / -17°C
Precipitation and Obscuration:	No Obscuration; No Precipitation		
Departure Point:	ST PETERSBURG , FL (PIE)	Type of Flight Plan Filed:	IFR
Destination:	(GPT)	Type of Clearance:	IFR
Departure Time:	13:10 Local	Type of Airspace:	Class G

Airport Information

Airport:	GULFPORT BILOXI REGIONAL GPT	Runway Surface Type:	
Airport Elevation:		Runway Surface Condition:	
Runway Used:	0	IFR Approach:	None
Runway Length/Width:		VFR Approach/Landing:	Forced landing

Wreckage and Impact Information

Crew Injuries:	1 Minor	Aircraft Damage:	Substantial
Passenger Injuries:	3 Minor	Aircraft Fire:	None
Ground Injuries:	N/A	Aircraft Explosion:	None
Total Injuries:	4 Minor	Latitude, Longitude:	30.469635,-89.149658(est)

Administrative Information

Investigator In Charge (IIC):	Powell, Phillip
Additional Participating Persons:	BUD MASSENGALE; JACKSON , MS
Original Publish Date:	October 4, 1996
Last Revision Date:	
Investigation Class:	Class
Note:	
Investigation Docket:	https://data.nts.gov/Docket?ProjectID=3682

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is an independent federal agency charged by Congress with investigating every civil aviation accident in the United States and significant events in other modes of transportation—railroad, transit, highway, marine, pipeline, and commercial space. We determine the probable causes of the accidents and events we investigate, and issue safety recommendations aimed at preventing future occurrences. In addition, we conduct transportation safety research studies and offer information and other assistance to family members and survivors for each accident or event we investigate. We also serve as the appellate authority for enforcement actions involving aviation and mariner certificates issued by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and US Coast Guard, and we adjudicate appeals of civil penalty actions taken by the FAA.

The NTSB does not assign fault or blame for an accident or incident; rather, as specified by NTSB regulation, “accident/incident investigations are fact-finding proceedings with no formal issues and no adverse parties ... and are not conducted for the purpose of determining the rights or liabilities of any person” (Title 49 *Code of Federal Regulations* section 831.4). Assignment of fault or legal liability is not relevant to the NTSB’s statutory mission to improve transportation safety by investigating accidents and incidents and issuing safety recommendations. In addition, statutory language prohibits the admission into evidence or use of any part of an NTSB report related to an accident in a civil action for damages resulting from a matter mentioned in the report (Title 49 *United States Code* section 1154(b)). A factual report that may be admissible under 49 *United States Code* section 1154(b) is available [here](#).